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PRESS RELEASE

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CONTEMPORARY PRINTS FROM CLEVELAND COLLECTIONS
September 13 - October 29, 1989

Eighty-one prints made between 1960 and 1988 by major American and European artists, selected from private collections in the Cleveland area, will be exhibited at The Cleveland Museum of Art from September 13 through October 29, 1989. The first show of its kind and size to be assembled entirely from local collections, the exhibition surveys major developments in contemporary printmaking, focusing on the print revival that began in the United States in the early 1960s.

Works by 36 artists, including Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Helen Frankenthaler, Jim Dine, Richard Diebenkorn, Frank Stella, and David Hockney, illustrate a variety of printmaking techniques. Included are lithographs, woodcuts, etchings, aquatints, screenprints, monotypes, and inventive works combining several print processes, many printed on handmade paper. Some prints--woodcuts and etchings where the block or plate deeply embosses the paper, or works printed on aluminum, Plexiglas, or fabric--have a three-dimensional, sculptural character. Recent advances in print technology and larger presses and papers have enabled artists to work with a complexity of technique and on a scale almost unimaginable thirty years ago, creating prints that can have the size and presence of paintings. The prints reflect a diversity of artistic styles, ranging from Pop art of the 1960s to realist, abstract, minimalist, and expressionist modes that artists have explored during the last two decades.

Jane Glaubinger, associate curator in the Museum's Department of Prints and Drawings, visited over 65 area collections and chose works from 31 lenders that illustrate the wide range and high quality of local collections. Guided by the criterion that "the great print is the one that combines technical facility with a compelling visual image," she believes that often "the best prints have been made by painters who have integrated printmaking into their work in other media so that it is yet another method, with different challenges, with which to experiment and explore their aesthetic concerns."

The print renaissance in this country was sparked by Tatyana Grosman who in 1957 founded Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), in West Islip, New York, one of the first workshops for fine art lithography in America, and persuaded painters who had little or no experience with printmaking, such as Johns, Rauschenberg, and Frankenthaler, to investigate the creative possibilities of lithography. In 1960 June Wayne, with the aid of a Ford Foundation grant, established Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles to train lithographic printers. Graduates of Tamarind went on to found their own lithography workshops, and soon studios devoted to other printmaking media were started as well. These workshops have provided exciting, supportive learning and working environments that have stimulated artists to experiment with the help of highly skilled technicians.

The new interest in printmaking emerged at the same time as Pop art, which took its mundane subjects from popular culture and mass media. Pop artists worked in an impersonal, mechanical style, rendering bold forms in flat areas of unmodulated color. For printmaking they used the commercial techniques of screenprinting and lithography. Tom Wesselmann's screenprint of a nude demonstrates how ideally this process, which produces a smooth, slick surface, suited the new style. Roy Lichtenstein adapted the formulaic imagery and trite situations of comic strips,

reproducing the pattern of dots that commercial printers use to create tones, in works like CRAK!, an offset lithograph. James Rosenquist, who had painted billboards to support himself, also chose offset lithography to make F-111, a print based on his gigantic (10 x 86 foot) painting of the same name, combining fragmented images of a fighter-bomber with closeups of consumer goods in an indictment of defense spending and the Vietnam War. Rauschenberg's collages of disparate elements (echoing the glut of images which bombard us everyday) use both screenprinting and lithography to transfer photographs and images from newspapers and magazines to paper or fabric.

By the late 1960s many artists had become interested in the textural qualities of woodcut, linoleum cut, and intaglio processes. The exhibition includes fine examples of etching and aquatint by Richard Diebenkorn and Robert Motherwell and woodcuts by Frankenthaler, Red Grooms, and Chuck Close. Jasper Johns's Scent illustrates the variations in texture possible when three different processes--in this case, lithography, linoleum cut, and woodcut--are used to print the same crosshatch design. Swan Engraving Blue, by Frank Stella, is a composition of densely congested images and textures. Printed in both relief and intaglio from a collage of etched and engraved metal plates onto thick, absorbent handmade paper, it is so deeply embossed that it appears sculptural.

The printmaking renaissance spurred a demand for fine handmade papers and encouraged the formation of new papermaking facilities. Artists began to think of paper not just as a support for an image but as an integral part of the work itself. Frankenthaler, for example, printed only the top half of the golden sheet of Japanese paper she used for her woodcut, Essence Mulberry, so that the paper's unusual color and texture become part of the composition. Some artists, like Kenneth Noland and Alan Shields, have created one-of-a-kind complex works from dyed and molded paper pulp.

Reacting against the meticulously produced, uniform print editions that dominated print publishing during the 1960s and early 70s, a number of artists, in addition to Noland and Shields, looked for ways to make each print unique. Eric Fischl has taken advantage of the revival of the monotype, a medium that yields a single impression that cannot be repeated. Jim Dine, Lucian Freud, and Howard Hodgkin have individualized their prints by hand coloring them.

These and other trends in contemporary printmaking are discussed by Jane Glaubinger in the exhibition catalogue available for \$1.00 at the Museum bookstore. Nancy McAfee of the Department of Education and Public Programs will give gallery talks in the exhibition on Wednesday, September 20, and Sunday, September 24, at 1:30 p.m.

The exhibition is made possible by the Cleveland law firm of Hahn Loeser & Parks.

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